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SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 1898.

THE DEBT OF THE WORLD TO PURE
SCIENCE.*

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THE fundamental importance of abstruse research receives too little consideration in our time. The practical side of life is all-absorbent; the results of research are utilized promptly and full recognition is awarded to the one who utilizes while the investigator is ignored. The student himself is liable to be regarded as a relic of medieval times and his unconcern respecting ordinary matters is serviceable to the dramatist and newspaper witlet in their times of need.

Yet every thoughtful man, far away as his calling may be from scientific investigation, hesitates to accept such judgment as accurate. Not a few, engrossed in the strife of the market-place, are convinced that, even from the selfish standpoint of mere enjoyment, less gain is found in amassing fortunes or in acquiring power over one's fellows than in the effort to solve Nature's problems. Men scoff at philosophical dreamers, but the scoffing is not according to knowledge. The exigencies of subjective philosophy brought about the objective philosophy. Error has led to the right. Alchemy prepared the way for Chemistry; Astrology for Astronomy; Cosmogony for Geology. The birth of in-

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*Presidential address delivered at the annual meeting of the New York Academy of Sciences, February 28, 1898.